

To: Varsha Gandikota-Nellutla, Executive Secretary of The Hague Group,
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Cc: Coordinator, the Hague Group, thehaguegroup@progressive.international

Monday, 31st August 2026

Dear Executive Secretary,

Subject: We call on the Hague group to step up efforts to defend the International Criminal Court and all those that support its work

We are writing to you on behalf of 11 members¹ of the International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations (INCLO), a global network of major national civil liberties organizations that come together to strengthen the international human rights movement.

We are alarmed by the recent announcement² that the United States Department of State will escalate its legal and political campaign against the International Criminal Court (ICC), with the stated aim of ‘dismantling’ the institution ‘brick by brick’. This campaign poses a new level of credible threat to the ICC, and erodes the foundations of the multilateral system and of institutions that adjudicate international law, including in the case of international crimes committed against the Palestinian people.

As national human rights organizations working across every region of the world, we regard the ICC as a cornerstone of the international rule of law, accountability, and respect for human rights³. For many survivors of the gravest human rights violations, the Court has offered the only avenue to justice and remedy, and its continued existence and effectiveness stand as a deterrent against further atrocities.

This month, the U.S. sanctioned the ICC’s President, Tomoko Akane, and Senior Trial Lawyer Abdoulaye Seye.⁴ This adds to a growing list of individuals and organizations targeted by the United States for their

¹ The American Civil Liberties Union (United States of America), the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (Canada), Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (Argentina), Conectas Direitos Humanos (Brazil), Dejusticia (Colombia), the Irish Council on Civil Liberties (Ireland), the Human Rights Law Centre (Australia), the Human Rights Legal Network (India), the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU), the Kenya Human Rights Commission (Kenya), and the Legal Resources Centre (South Africa).

² Press release available at:

<https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/07/state-department-launches-campaign-to-dismantle-international-criminal-courts-threat-to-american-sovereignty>

³ See statement by 10 INCLO members: <https://inclo.net/latest/defend-the-icc/>

⁴ Press release available at:

<https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/08/advancing-the-united-states-campaign-to-address-the-threat-posed-by-the-international-criminal-court/>

work with the Court, including ICC judges, prosecutors already existing US sanctions against the ICC, a UN independent expert and three Palestinian human rights organisations are a direct attack on the independence of international institutions, and international rule of law⁵. They violate the fundamental rights of judges, staff, and human rights practitioners, curtail civic space and threaten the continued operation of civil society organizations that support the Court's work.

We have seen first-hand the chilling effect of these sanctions on organizations engaged in the pursuit of international justice for the human rights violations against the Palestinian people, and on those who seek to support or cooperate with them. The sanctions impact freedom of expression and association across the human rights sector, particularly for organizations that work on human rights in Palestine.

We welcome the Hague Group's global leadership in championing international law, defending international legal institutions, and standing in solidarity with the people of Palestine. Given that the ICC has a major role to play to achieve such aims, we urge the Hague Group to prioritize protecting the ICC and ensuring a robust civic space for organizations that work to secure international accountability for human rights violations against the Palestinian people.

The actions taken by Member States so far, however, **have not matched the scale of the sanctions**, leaving individuals and organizations without adequate protection.

Given the recent announcement that this campaign against the ICC will now escalate to a new and more severe level, we call on the Member States in the Hague Group to direct their attention to this matter, to **step up its efforts to defend the ICC against these attacks**, and to protect the ICC's judges, staff, and the individuals and organizations that cooperate with it.

In particular, we respectfully urge this Secretariat to place the following actions within the agenda of the Hague Group, to ensure that the Member States that integrate it:

- Take a public stance condemning the sanctions against the ICC, its judges, and individuals and organizations that cooperate with it.
- Adopt coordinated diplomatic measures in bilateral, regional, and international settings, to protect the ICC. This could include actions such as:
 - Urgently reach out to other Member States to prevent withdrawals from the Rome Statute in the context of the US campaign, and to encourage further ratification;
 - Seek further engagement on this issue by multilateral and judicial bodies such as the UN General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the UN human rights system, and regional and international courts, to ensure that the multilateral system is clearly positioned against the sanctions and in support of the ICC.

⁵ For an overview of impacts, see:

<https://coalitionfortheicc.org/news/cicc-launches-criminalising-accountability-report>

- Protect individuals and organizations targeted by US sanctions by activating blocking frameworks and legislation that require banks, payment processors, and other operators to not implement such sanctions.
- Engage with banks, payment processors, and other operators to ensure that they not pre-emptively de-risk against ICC staff, judges, or cooperating NGOs, and facilitate concrete banking alternatives for designated individuals and institutions.
- Ensure that civil society organizations and individual experts, not only the Court and its officials, are included in any coordinated response to the sanctions, and that they are extended emergency support, including banking solutions and funding, given the financial impact of sanctions.
- Sustain diplomatic engagement with the United States through public and private channels in order to secure the withdrawal of the sanctions and an end to the campaign against the ICC.
- Maintain full operational cooperation with the ICC under the Rome Statute, including the prompt arrest and surrender of individuals subject to ICC warrants regardless of office, nationality, or political sensitivity.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet your team virtually at your earliest convenience in order to discuss these recommendations in further detail.

Sincerely Yours,



Diana Esther Guzman

Co-Chair, International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations